

# Supreme Court candidates talk travel, spending on campaign

By MICHAEL GALLAGHER and JOANNA MARKELL staff writers  
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Greg Zempel is a veteran of campaigning for office, but there are some significant differences this time around, including the distances between campaign stops.

"In one month I put 5,200 miles on my vehicle," Zempel said.

Zempel, who has held the office of Kittitas County prosecutor for more than 20 years, is running for State Supreme Court Position 5 against incumbent Chief Justice Barbara Madsen.

"Campaigning (for this) is quite a bit different," Zempel said.

## Money

While judicial races are nonpartisan, that does not mean people aren't taking sides. According to the state Public Disclosure Commission records as of Thursday, Zempel's campaign has raised \$120,978 and spent \$80,833. Money has come from some high-profile backers, such as Paul Allen's Vulcan, Inc.

According to the disclosure commission, Zempel also has been backed by \$313,121 in independent expenditures. That includes \$100,000 spent on radio ads by a Political Action Committee called Judicial Integrity, and \$30,000 spent on canvassing phone calls by a PAC called Stand for Children.

Madsen has raised \$89,320 and spent \$77,952 as of Thursday, according to the commission website. She has attracted \$110,716 in independent expenditures, with the top contributor being a PAC called Know Your Judicial Ballot.

"Independent expenditures as an issue has been interesting, that's a new one for me," Zempel said. "The amount of money it takes to run for Supreme Court is pretty astronomical. Paying people to coordinate a campaign also has been different."

Madsen, too, noted the level of spending in the race. She was first elected to the court in 1992, and re-elected in 1998, 2004 and 2010. Much of this campaign is similar to past races, with one exception, she said.

"The only difference is the amount of money from outside sources, which is a disconcerting turn of events," she said.

## **Incumbent**

Madsen has been traveling around the state for events and campaign stops. “You need to get everywhere in the state and also do your job,” she said. “It makes for a hectic several months.”

Madsen is a native of Renton and was elected by fellow justices to serve as chief justice of the court in 2009.

She said she understands that people in Kittitas County know and have elected her opponent, but “the judicial community knows me and has elected me” and she is perceived to be a strong voice for the judiciary. “We need a strong leader for that branch of government,” she said.

She is the longest serving chief justice in the state, which shows confidence in her work, she said.

## **Lessons from the road**

Zempel said he is traveling to every county and attending events. Often he is part of forums that involve the candidates for other statewide offices so he is hearing about a wide range of concerns from residents.

Zempel said that while there are obvious divisions there is also a commonality.

“The vast majority of what I hear coming from people’s hearts is the sense the system is not working for people,” Zempel said. “There’s a sense of frustration.”

Zempel said there are challenges to a statewide campaign — being on the road away from family and work — but it is also a positive experience.

“I think overall what I’m going to take from this is there are some really wonderful people in all corners of the state, people who really care about their neighbors and this country,” Zempel said. “They are involved and passionate.”